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A MISTAKE IN STRATEGY¹

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So much has been said and written first and last about the present religious crisis that the subject has become certainly trite if not positively tedious. Yet in spite of all that has been told us, there still remain many things to say; and I hope I shall be pardoned if I try to say one of these. The present situation has often been likened to a military campaign between the forces of Christianity and its opponents; and from that point of view I should like to draw attention to what seems to me a very considerable strategical mistake on the part of the leaders—and of the rank and file—of the Christian hosts. To put the matter as briefly as may be, it seems to me that we are laying Christianity open unnecessarily to attack by holding to positions which have ceased to be of real importance merely for the sake of sentiment and conservatism. In short, to drop the metaphor, we are allowing our opponents to identify Christianity—and we ourselves are officially identifying it—with doctrines which have ceased to be vital to us or to the world of modern thought.

A current opinion, often voiced, insists that most of the danger to Christianity today is due to the fact that some of the leaders of thought have been saying too openly and plainly what they believe. Possibly there may be some truth in this; but I am convinced that the greater source of peril lies in the fact that most of us Christians have failed to say what we believe plainly enough. As I look back upon the story of dead faiths and consider the causes of their mortality, I do not recall one that was destroyed by the arguments of its enemies. Religions do not die because they are refuted; they die because they become unim-

¹ This paper was read before the Pastors' Institute of Berkshire County at Pittsfield, Mass., on October 27, 1909, and a little later before the Philosophical Union of Williams College, under the title, "Sincerity in Religion."

portant. They drop out silently and unnoticed in the night; not because they are proved untrue, but because no one thinks it worth his while to prove them untrue. They perish because their former adherents have ceased any longer to take them seriously.

Now unless we would be guilty of an almost unpardonably blind optimism, we must, as it seems to me, recognize that the present situation in Christianity shows at least some of the symptoms which in other and older faiths have proved to be the heralds of decline. What are the causes of this state of things? Doubtless there are several, but one cause I am sure is this: the people are ceasing to take Christianity seriously. And if we ask ourselves sincerely why this is so, I think that we shall find one reason to be that we Christians have allowed Christianity to become identified, in the mind of the world, with its less important as well as with its essential elements. The truth is, there is a great deal in traditional Christianity which we do not ourselves take seriously, and the world, judging by our actions rather than by our professions, sees that we do not.

Ever since the days of Professor Bain it has been a commonplace of psychology that the ultimate test of belief is action. If you want to know what a man really believes, see how he acts. A man's conduct is a better expression of his belief than are his words. Judged by this standard, the weekly repetition of many of the articles of our creeds is a rather astonishing spectacle. For the truth is we do not really believe what we verbally profess. Down in the bottom of our hearts we know that many of the things we allow others to suppose we believe about religion rest on foundations so insecure that in any other field we should give them up at once and either deny them or confess our ignorance. We should be ashamed to hold and proclaim views on science or government half so outgrown as are many of the doctrines we feel bound to cling to because they are called "Christian." And as a result we cannot put our hearts into what we say about these things, and the critics of Christianity see that we cannot. If we could believe these things with the fervor our fathers felt for them we could still make them living for the world. But, for better or worse, that power is gone from us.

I hope that in writing thus I shall not be understood as denying any place to a sincere but undemonstrable faith. So the faith be sincere and genuinely alive I care little how undemonstrable it be. Concerning most vital questions we cannot absolutely know. It is not only the just who live by faith. And our attitude toward the deeper things of life with which religion has to do must always be one of faith rather than of certain knowledge. It is not only right but inevitable that we should trust where we cannot prove. The "will to believe" is almost a necessity to every sane and happy life. But on the other hand, we must remember that it is impossible for most of us to have any real faith in anything that is obviously inconsistent with the established results of modern science and criticism and with the modern way of looking at things. It is therefore not faith that I am opposing, but the shadow and semblance of it which are still hanging about long after the real substance is departed.

It would be very far from my purpose in this paper to make out an *index expurgatorius*, as it were, of Christian teaching and to dictate to the reader what he should and what he should not profess. Each one knows best what doctrines to him are real and what are not. But if we examine our hearts sincerely in the matter I think that most of us will find that we have been passively or actively professing belief in dogmas which to us are really dead, and we have taken no definite stand to show that these are not an essential part of our Christian faith. As an indication and illustration, merely, of the sort of thing I have in mind, let me refer to certain particular doctrines of our fathers, which for at least a large part of Christendom are no longer vital, yet which still form part of our official creeds. Many others may suggest themselves to the reader. And again let me say that in singling these out I do not mean to imply that they must be given up by anyone who honestly and earnestly holds them. I wish merely to make the question concrete: Do we believe what we profess? The doctrines will speak for themselves.

I have recently been reading over the latest declarations of belief of some of our leading Protestant denominations—the doctrines they wish to stand for before the world and with which

they would identify the Christian faith. Among these doctrines I find the following: the infallibility of the Scriptures, the creation of the world out of nothing in six days, the election of certain individuals to eternal life by the free act of God without reference to their conduct or deserts, the literal acceptance of the Garden of Eden story, the fall of man as there described, and the consequent inheritance of "original sin" by Adam's descendants, the loss of free will, the inability of the natural man to do right, the doctrine that God blinds sinners and hardens their hearts, the death of Christ as necessary to satisfy divine justice, the resurrection of the body, the eternal punishment of the wicked in a place of torment called hell.

This list of doctrines, if I am not mistaken, arouses in many of our minds a sense of curiosity and wonder. We are so far from believing them ourselves that our chief reaction upon them is a feeling of surprise that anyone can ever have believed them. If we do not assert our refusal of them it is because it is simply not worth our while to do so. And yet these doctrines are seriously put forward by the official boards of some of our churches among the things for which Christianity stands. If you want to know what Christianity is, they say, that's it!

As most of these doctrines, however, are safely buried in creeds read by none but the curious and are seldom preached or taught, I shall say no more about them. But I do wish to consider more seriously a few much more important points of our theology which are not confined to our creeds and upon which the world rightly demands to know our position.

The first of these is the question of authority. Where do we stand upon it? What view of the nature of the Scriptures do we mean to put forth as the Christian view? It will not do to blind ourselves and seek to blind others with rhetoric. We must take a definite position about which there shall be no possibility of misunderstanding. Do we really accept the Bible as our infallible rule of faith and practice? Do we really believe that its authority is superior to that of human reason and that in the last resort reason must bow to it? Do we honestly consider it different in kind from other books? Are we convinced that it has an external,

supernatural authority over our belief and conduct which we are bound to obey even in contravention of the generally accepted results of science and criticism? If so, if we do really believe this with all our hearts, then by all means let us teach it. But let us face the fact that we have the whole heavy drift of advancing human thought against us. And if, on the other hand, we really recognize the essentially human element in our Scriptures, if we feel down in our hearts that in the last resort reason must judge the Bible rather than vice versa, then why not frankly say so, and use our influence to identify the Christian view with the progressive thought of our age?

Perhaps most important of all for our purposes is the question of the "plan of salvation," so carefully worked out by our fathers. It is doubtless familiar to all readers of this *Journal*: the fall of man, the separation between him and God, the offended justice and love of the Creator, the council of the Trinity, the plan carefully laid out to save man—or rather some men—and yet satisfy divine justice, the incarnation and sacrifice of the Second Person of the Trinity, the imputation of his righteousness to us, the acceptance of it by an act of head as well as heart on our part, the remission of our sins only through this shedding of Christ's blood and our faith, and our consequent final justification, adoption, and sanctification. How clear, how simple, how neat—and also how remote, how unreal, how distant from all the ideas of the nature of the universe and of the divine that have been growing up in our minds for the past fifty years. I know of course this is not true of all. I know that there are still thousands of good Christians who sincerely believe that we have here an unmistakable insight into the inmost councils of the Trinity. But I also know that there are thousands—and increasing thousands—of equally good and equally sincere Christians who find it as impossible to take this plan of salvation seriously as it would be to believe in the gods of Olympus. Let us ask our own hearts to which of these two classes we ourselves belong. Do we honestly believe that the many good men and women about us who do not—and seemingly cannot—accept the death of Christ by the act of faith made essential by the "plan of salvation" are going to eternal torment? I venture to affirm

that we do not believe any such thing. A man who really believed that would tear his hair and rush madly about the streets. He could not sleep nor rest till he had gone to every friend, to every mere acquaintance of his who stood in this peril and labored with him night and day to flee from the wrath to come. If our friends were asleep in a burning building how would we run and risk our lives to fetch them forth! But if the "plan of salvation" be true, many of our dearest ones are in a sadder plight and more dire peril than any earthly conflagration could bring. Yet even those who profess with most reiteration their belief in the "plan" are able to sleep at night and enjoy their meals, and talk with their friends who are in this fearful danger about politics and church suppers, and not one of them goes mad from worry or dies of a broken heart. The truth is, whatever else of the theology of our fathers we may believe, we do not believe in the plan of salvation they outlined. We may possibly believe that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," or that, as is so often said "Christ's death is our only ground for hope" (God's love apparently being insufficient); but we do not believe that faith in the mediation of Christ is the only thing that can save our friends from eternal damnation.

Finally, a very practical question presents itself in the matter of prayer. Do we really believe that by praying we can induce God to interfere with the laws of Nature or persuade him to do things which otherwise he would not do? If we do not so believe why do we retain a kind of public prayer which implies such a belief? Of the tremendous power of prayer over our own souls, of its efficacy in healing the spirit and through it the body, no one, be he Christian or atheist, can for a moment doubt. Nor will the reality of prayer as communion with the Divine be questioned by any Christian. But when all this is said, the unreality of much that is called prayer is sadly apparent. Especially is this true of the conventional long prayer of our church services. The public prayer that arouses in the audience the prayerful attitude of mind is something we could ill afford to do without. It is the most important part of the service. But my experience has been that the long prayer of our evangelical services seldom does this. In the first place it is as a rule so long as to weary the listener and of

such a nature as to discourage the attention. I venture to say not one out of ten in the audience follows what is said. And while my experience may have been exceptionally unfortunate, the average long prayer as I have known it consists largely in a collection of statements which presumably God knows quite as well as we, and a succession of requests many of which imply the belief that by prayer we can induce God to some particular interference which he would not perform or think of but for our suggestion. We ask for all sorts of things which we do not really believe prayer can effect. And we go on with it all very solemnly because we always have and because it wouldn't look well to give it up. I ask, does it look well to continue it? In keeping up this kind of prayer are we not laying our Christainity open to attack or even holding it up to ridicule? Real prayer is, I suppose, the most important thing in religion. It is, as Sabatier says, "religion in act." But by identifying it in the eyes of the world with this sad counterfeit and saying, This is prayer, we are advertising that it is a burdensome form and a mere relic of an outgrown past. The reason why prayer is today of less importance in the eyes of the world than it used to be, the reason why so many of us are really unable to pray, is because we have seldom really tried; and one reason why we do not try is that we have not been made to take prayer very seriously. When we see the motorman turn on the electric current, we feel sure that something is happening. When we hear the long prayer in church few of us, now-a-days, have any such feeling. Somehow or other, the things men see about them in our times are leading many of them to feel that religion is very much less real than electricity.

And the pitiful thing about it all is that it is all so unnecessary. Genuine religion is as forceful today as it ever was. It is still the most efficient power in human life. But we who in some sense stand for it are making the world think it half dead by identifying it with a theology which was made for another century. And while religion has the gift of perennial youth, theology grows old like the rest of us. As Professor James says in his *Pluralistic Universe*:

Those of us who are sexagenarians have witnessed in our persons one of those gradual mutations of intellectual climate, due to innumerable influences, that

make the thought of a past generation seem as foreign to its successor as if it were the expression of a different race of men. The theological machinery that spoke so livingly to our ancestors, with its finite age of the world, its creation out of nothing, its juridical morality and eschatology, its relish for rewards and punishments, its treatment of God as an external contriver, an intelligent and moral governor—sounds as odd to most of us as if it were some outlandish savage religion. The vaster vistas which scientific evolutionism has opened, and the rising tide of social democratic ideals have changed the type of our imagination, and the older monarchical theism is obsolete or obsolescent. The place of the divine in the world must be more organic and intimate. An external creator and his institutions may still be verbally confessed at church in formulas that linger by their mere inertia, but the life is out of them, we avoid dwelling on them, *the sincere heart of us is elsewhere*.

And yet, though “the sincere heart of us is elsewhere,” we allow the materialists and the growing army of atheists to identify Christianity with just these dead things, without a word of protest on our parts.

Why [asks Mr. Lewis Dickinson] do many free thinkers find that Christianity, in any of the forms it assumes, is an inadequate vehicle of their faith? [And his answer is] that Christian teaching, in many important respects, no longer helps but hinders us in expressing our view of the world and of society. Let us try to see how [he continues]. Christianity tells us that the world was created by an omnipotent and all-good God. I will not press the difficulty so often urged and never answered, which arises from the admitted fact of evil. But apart from this, the idea of creation has ceased to be credible; and what is worse, has ceased to be interesting. It is the idea of *process* with which *we* are preoccupied. Is this process also a progress? If so, what are its laws? Whither does it tend? What is the relation of human life and human ideals to the universe? Is man a temporary accident? Or is he, or something that is coming out of him, the goal and meaning of the whole? These are the kind of questions we are asking. And Christianity has either no answer to give, or answers that are felt to be absurd. But if that be so, Christianity cannot serve as an expression of our emotional reaction to the world. For such expression we have to turn elsewhere, and construct for ourselves, if we can, new myths.

These words of Dickinson's express very mildly the opinion which many good and earnest men are forming of Christianity today. And by our public creeds, and still more by our silence, we are allowing them and their followers thus to identify Christianity with its outgrown shell. The result of this lack of courage to speak out, of this “whipping of dead horses” as our opponents put it, is a loss of interest in religious matters even among nominal

Christians, a deadening of the spirit, an atmosphere of artificiality in much of our so-called worship. Religion with many of us church-goers is becoming—or has always been—largely a matter of convention. We are at times like children playing at a game of “make-believe.” We meet at church and seem to say to each other, “Let’s pretend!—Let’s pretend we believe in the plan of salvation so neatly outlined for us; let’s pretend we believe in the creed we so glibly repeat; let’s pretend we believe in the efficacy of the prayers to which we listen—or fail to listen—and the prayers we say while thinking of something else.” I know a woman, a friend of mine, whose religion seems to consist in going to church on Sunday mornings, calling on her mother-in-law Sunday evenings, visiting the cemetery once a month, and making hot-cross buns on Good Friday. Religion as a vital living thing, a force within her, a genuine reality like other realities to be reckoned with outside of convention, is something of which she seems never to have dreamed.

And there is nothing that suffers more from being made conventional and second-hand than does religion. There is nothing that more needs to be thoroughly empirical—a first-hand immediate experience of the individual, a living force abreast of and in advance of the times. If it is to be all this, we who speak for it, we who in some sense represent it and to a considerable extent determine what it shall stand for in the eyes of the community, must see to it that it be identified with no dead beliefs, no matter how dear and sacred these beliefs may have been. We must let the dead bury their dead, remembering that our God is not the God of the dead but of the living. In the name of the Christianity we love we must send forth a spiritual Declaration of Independence from all that would bind it to the dead part of a glorious past. We must be dreadfully in earnest; and in order to be so we must cling to nothing which we do not with all our might believe.

Some one may object: “Would not this be to preach mere morality? If we cast aside the doctrines criticized, what is left?”—What is left? Look into your Bibles, look up at the starry heavens, look into your own hearts, and see! Is not an infinity still ours too great for naming? Jesus is ours still; the human soul with

all its depths and mysteries is ours; ours is the eternal struggle upward toward the light; God is ours. Nor has faith in any way lost its value. Faith is a necessity without which we cannot live. I would by no means limit our teaching and our profession to the demonstrable. It is not the substitution of knowledge for faith that I would urge; it is the substitution of a living faith for a dead one. And it is only the living faith which never "makes believe," which never pretends for the sake of appearance or of sentiment—it is this faith only that is able to subdue kingdoms, work righteousness, quench the violence of fire, and put to flight armies of aliens.

Nor do I wish to be understood as urging the formation of a "new religion" based upon reason and individual experience. That we should cut ourselves off from our splendid Christian past is one of the last things I could wish. A continuous growth out of the past seems to me the ideal—so it be really a growth. Both elements are needed in a great religion, conservatism and progress, independent thought and reverence for the authority of the past. This of course is a commonplace; but just how the two should be combined is not so easy a question.

The eighteenth century laid its emphasis upon rationality and the free thought of the individual, with but little historical sense for the relevancy and importance of origins and development. It prided itself on being the "Age of Reason," and upon its production of "natural religion." The nineteenth century swung to the other extreme. It sought out origins and traced developments, and joined the present with the past in unbroken continuity. In doing this it, of course, never denied the importance of reason, but it was often so busy with its historical problem that it rather neglected the questions of truth which had chiefly interested the eighteenth century. The twentieth century is the heir of its predecessors and it is its task to work out, by trial and error, the best possible combination of what is most valuable in its inheritance.

We certainly cannot go back to the natural religion of the eighteenth century and invent a new religion of our own. And if we look at the various "new religions" about us, I think we shall see the reason why. To put it as mildly and conservatively and as

kindly as possible, these attempts to found a perfectly non-historical and purely rational religion fill most of us with the feeling of something at least like "bad form." There is something in such a "religion" not in good taste, and to go over to it, we feel, would show rather a lack of breeding. The people who go into that sort of thing are doubtless perfectly good people, but we should not like to have it known that any of our immediate family were of the number. We feel sure that most of the male members have long hair—or that the female members have short hair—that there must be something a little queer about them. I am inclined to think that this feeling, prejudiced and somewhat intolerant as it probably is, expresses after all a very sound and trustworthy instinct. It is a fundamentally right feeling that the normal human being will not want to cut himself off altogether from the past and trust to his own reason alone, that he cannot with impunity neglect the real and great authority of the experience of the race, and that he who does so may indeed be worthy and sincere, but presents, in spite of his sincerity, a somewhat ludicrous spectacle. He reminds one, somewhat, of the small boy in long trousers, who wants to be a big man too soon. Or he might be compared to a very rationalistic person who should in summer most sensibly go naked—clothes at such a time being a burdensome convention. This, at any rate, is the way I feel when I meet those really admirable people who in their love of abstract truth have quite forgotten that by their very birth they are Christian, and who hence seek to ignore both the Christian tradition and the Christian Scriptures. For the Bible is *our historical sacred book*. It is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. For historical and psychological reasons we cannot get from the Upanishads or the Dhammapada or the Koran or the other "sacred books of the East" the spiritual nourishment which we can and do get from the Bible. And in like manner for most of us a God out of all relation to the history of our race could hardly be our God at all, in any very vital sense. We may accept an "Absolute" from Royce—much as we accept argon from Ramsay—as a philosophical object; but the Absolute does not become a religious object—a genuine part of our inner lives—until we have somehow persuaded ourselves that He

is just Jehovah under a new name—that the philosophers have really been describing to us the God in whom we have always believed, we and our fathers.

And in much the same way, the Christian tradition handed down to us through these nineteen glorious centuries is an integral part of our religion. The sense of continuity with the Christian Fathers, the strength that comes from feeling behind one the noble army of martyrs, the holy church throughout all the world, the sense of clasping hands across the centuries with the great Christian dead, united with them in an organic whole through one Lord, one faith, one baptism—these and other things like these are the priceless heritage of our Christianity, and we cannot and we will not give them up.

And yet the other side of the argument must not be neglected. If one must err on one side or the other he had best trust too much rather than too little to the light of what reason he has. To accept the authority of tradition in despite of reason, to love the dear warm past better than the austere truth, is the greater danger of the two. For though religion gets much of its emotional strength from its associations with the past, it has, after all, more in common with science than with history. And not even science itself needs more than it to be abreast of the times—and leading the times. Our God must be our God first of all, whether he be the God of the Fathers or not. We must taste and see for ourselves that he is good; we cannot take his goodness on the word of anyone else, be it King David or St. Paul.

The reconciliation of the new with the old must be sought in the continuity of a common life. The old creeds and the old doctrines which have no longer any real vitality and can make no genuine appeal to us and our generation must be treated reverently, indeed, but must not be allowed to choke the life of the Christianity which is dearer than they. All that was best and truest in them will grow on into the Christianity of tomorrow. And if the spirit of Christ permeates our thinking and our living, and if we be loyal to the truth we see as he was loyal to the truth he saw, we may be sure that the product of our thought will be essentially Christian. For Christianity is not like an old bottle into which new wine

may not be poured. It is like a tree, rather, which can get its nourishment from all sorts of things, and transforms earth, water, and air alike into its own self. The continuity of a common life will continue to unify it in the future as it has in the past. For the self identity of a religion is not of the sort possessed by a stone, but the sort you find in the tree or the flower. It is not an identity of content, but an identity of life.

The subject has, I confess, carried us rather far afield. But let me once more emphasize a fact which the last comparison has suggested. Christianity is not like a stone or a clod; it is a living thing. And if it is to live it must be allowed to grow. To check its growth is to choke its life. I believe it will live and grow, but I also believe its life and its growth depend on the attitude its defenders take in this hour of its trial. And while I am on the whole optimistic, I cannot shut my eyes to the real dangers that surround it. It is being attacked today on many sides and with great skill and vigor. The many anti-Christians are tremendously in earnest and genuinely devoted to the cause of humanity as they see it. Many of them are sincere and admirable as well as able men. They feel that Christianity has had its innings and has failed. They are convinced that it points backward rather than forward, that it binds rather than makes free, that its teachings are the relics of an outgrown past, and its leaders, blind leaders of the blind. They are organizing a very determined opposition. In Catholic lands they are identifying Christianity in the minds of the people with a decadent church. In Protestant Germany the followers of Nietzsche, the followers of Haeckel, and the "League of Monists" are using every effort to discredit Christianity. In England the Rationalist Press Association is carrying on a successful anti-Christian and anti-religious propaganda. And in our own country able men like Mangasarian in Chicago are calling upon the people to cut loose from all Christian ties and form a new religion which shall be more in accord with natural science than is the Christianity which the churches teach. It is not a time, then, when we can afford to be influenced against our better judgment by the pardonable sentiment of religious conservatism. We cannot afford in the presence of the enemy to continue to expose ourselves

to ruinous loss in a fatuous endeavor to hold positions which are really no longer either tenable or desirable, simply because our fathers held them. In the race that is set before us, against so swift an opponent, we must lay aside every weight. It will be fatal to cling to useless incumbrances merely because they bear the name "Christian" and because we fear that our religion, if we give them up, will no longer bear that name. After all, the important question is not what name the religion of the future shall bear, but how far that religion shall be molded by those who love the name of Christ and who shall be able to bring into it the spirit of the Master and the essential part of his teachings.

For there can be no manner of doubt about the part which science and philosophy and criticism are destined to play in fashioning the faith of the coming centuries. Science and philosophy and criticism are here and are here to stay. Their details may and will be modified, but their fundamental point of view is not going to be given up. Every year they extend their sway over thousands of minds. No one can prevent them from having their share—and a large share it will be—in determining the nature of the religion of the future. Are we Christians going to have our share in it? That is the important question for us to face. Are we going to co-operate gladly and helpfully as Christians, in the building of the faith of the future and so keep it essentially Christian? Or are we going to put ourselves on record, and our Master on record, as forces of obstruction and decay, of obscurantism and superstition? Are we going to make men feel that faith is believing what you know isn't so, that Christianity and truth are alternatives and opposites, and that the influence of Jesus is working to keep men from knowing the truth, lest the truth should make them free? Let us beware lest in this matter we be found fighting against God.

I am advocating, I confess, a somewhat radical change in our attitude. Such a change will require courage. There will be an outcry against it on the part of some. We shall be told that our message is less comforting than the older view. It is possible that this is the case. But if it be so we must remember that our foremost duty is not to preach pleasant things, but to be loyal to the

truth as we see the truth. The consequences of the truth are in the hands of God. There have always been those who have said to their prophets, "Prophecy unto us smooth things"; and the false prophet has ever been he who was willing to cry "Peace! Peace!" when there was no peace.

And there can be no real peace for religion so long as there remains in it a vestige of the trivial or the unreal. There can be no peace for it till we who in some sense represent it shall have freed it from the bad name that it is, more or less justly, beginning to earn, and until we have made it as serious in the eyes of the world as are the scientific hypotheses about electricity and gravitation. It is only by the strictest honesty and frankness that we can do this. But when we shall have done it the opponents of religion will have been deprived of half their weapons, numbers of able young men will once more be attracted into the ministry, the serious-minded public may be brought back to the churches, and we who seek to teach and to defend the religion of our fathers will be able to put into it not only all our hearts but all our minds as well. The certain result of this would be not only increased respect for religion, but an increased practical efficiency in our efforts and a growing influence of the Christian spirit in the lives of men.

Of course religion is not theology, and a mere reform of the latter will not give life to the former. But though it will not give it life, it may well allow the life that is already there, abounding and full, to grow on unchecked. It is, in fact, just because religion is not theology that I would set it free from so much of its theological expression as is no longer a help but a hindrance to its life. It is out of the heart that religion arises. It is more akin to poetry than to prose, it is more a matter of immediate intuition and of mystic feeling than of exact statement. It gets itself expressed in the glowing symbolism of the Old Testament and in the music and liturgy of our Christian service. And it is no more to be identified with a theological theory than the life of a man is to be identified with a definition of protoplasm.

And yet, because religion has also a rational element and a definite view as to the nature of the world, and because it means to be not only useful and beautiful but true as well, it must have some

sort of theology. And this theology must not be poetry. Religion must have a message for men's minds as well as for their hearts, and if it is to do so it must strive to express exactly what it means. Hence it will not do to say: "Let all the old doctrines of our creeds stand, and let him who cannot accept them literally take them symbolically." There is, indeed, nothing insincere in a symbolic interpretation as such provided it be frank and open. But the world has a right to know, and ought to know, exactly what the churches and what we individual Christians believe. And for us to state our belief in the old words, in order to satisfy orthodoxy, while giving to the words a private interpretation, to satisfy our consciences, can hardly be called ingenuous. Simple sincerity demands that if we retain the historical formulations of the Christian faith as the expression of our own, we should let it be known publicly that we mean by these formulas something very different from that which our fathers meant by them. And to stick to a pious form of words while denying, in our hearts but not publicly, their obvious and historical meaning is the essence of intellectual dishonesty. And not only so; it also gives and keeps up the impression in the mind of the world that we Christians are only half in earnest with our theology, and that what we say about God and about man, about sin and about destiny, need not be regarded very seriously, since what we say is always capable of symbolic interpretation. The world knows perfectly well that no scientist, no historian—no one, in short, who has a message to give and is in earnest about it—puts what he has to say in a form that requires to be taken symbolically. Nor were the dogmas of our creeds meant to be taken so. They were not the product of the poetic but of the philosophic mind. They were intended as exact statements of belief, and to take them in any other way is essentially unhistorical. And the splendid, clear-headed, straight-forward men who framed them would be the first to cry out against any merely symbolical or private interpretation. "Say what you mean, in God's name!" they would protest, "Speak out like men what you honestly think. But do not use our words as a vehicle for conveying the very opposite of our meaning!"

The present situation is not unlike that which presented itself

in the time of Jeremiah and again in the time of Paul. While we think of these men as essentially constructive, the fact is that their construction was based upon and made possible by a message that was first of all destructive. The great service of Jeremiah to his religion was his bold attack upon the sacred dogma of the Inviolability of the Temple, and his denial of the existence of any such God as the one in whom his fellow-countrymen believed. He made no attempt by smooth words to reinterpret the old dogma symbolically, so as to hurt nobody's feelings. He had too much respect for his religion to do anything of that sort; and fortunate it is for his religion that it was so. And in like manner, the greatest service which the Apostle Paul performed for the Christian faith was in cutting it loose, once for all, from the outgrown forms of Judaism. As Harnack puts it: "Someone had to stand up and say, 'The old is done away with': he had to brand any further pursuit of it as a sin: he had to show that all things were become new. The man who did that was the apostle Paul, and it is in having done it that his greatness in the history of the world consists."

We need today a new Jeremiah and a new Paul. We need men brave enough to say out, in manly fashion, what they believe about religious matters as frankly and as clearly as they speak their views in matters of science. These, indeed, we already have in considerable numbers. But most of all we need to be authorized by the leaders and by the rank and file of the Christian church to call out to the opponents of our faith, "Knock down your man of straw as you like. Amuse yourselves with it as you please. But know that the real Christianity is no more like the image with which you are playing than the great sun is like the child's drawing of it. For the real Christianity is not to be found in the outgrown dogmas of mediaeval theologians, but in the words of the Master and in the lives and hearts of his followers. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen as he said unto you."